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SUGGESTIONS TO EXTENSION DAIRYMEN

The job of selling the Weigh-A-Day-A-Month plan of production record keeping may not be an easy one. The reasons for this are (1) most farmers don't like to keep records and (2) Extension dairymen have talked record keeping for many years. Furthermore, the dairymen not now keeping records, generally speaking, are the thousands of small herd owners who have not been convinced that records will help them increase net farm income.

The fact still remains, however, that every dairy farmer regardless of herd size must keep records to build and maintain an efficient and profitable herd. And now we have a new record keeping plan which no dairy farmer, regardless of herd size can afford to turn down.

The Weigh-A-Day-A-Month plan is especially designed for the small herd owners. Furthermore it can be conducted on either a small or large scale. Very little organizational effort is required. But one thing is certain--the Weigh-A-Day-A-Month plan will not sell itself. Simple and inexpensive record keeping plans have been tried in numerous States in years gone by and for one reason or another they have, with few exceptions, fared poorly. If the Weigh-A-Day plan is to succeed, a new or unusual procedure of presenting it to farmers must be employed. In doing this, special effort should be made to make Weigh-A-Day an integral part of the over-all dairy husbandry Extension program. It is a project which will fit well into a county dairy program. In Illinois and North Carolina where the Weigh-A-Day-A-Month plan has been successfully carried out, this is the way it was developed.

The following suggestions should help you in selling the Weigh-A-Day-A-Month plan.

1. Obtain the approval of the plan from your Extension Service Administration. Make sure your director and district supervisors or county agent leader understand the objectives of the program. Point up dairy farmers' need for production records and the value of them. Explain the mechanics of the Weigh-A-Day-A-Month plan. Also your proposals for carrying it on.
2. Obtain the support of your State dairy organizations and other groups or agencies that are interested. You can do this by individual contacts or you may want to set up a meeting with representatives of all interested organizations. Here is a list of organizations which should be interested. You probably have others. State Dairy Association, State branch of the American Dairy Associations, State farm organizations, purebred breed associations, artificial breeding associations, milk producers cooperatives, cooperative creameries association, Farmers Home Administration, and vocational agriculture department.



Representatives of the American Dairy Association, the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Milk Producers Federation participated in the early development of the Weigh-A-Day-A-Month plan and at that time indicated a desire to help sell the idea. It would be a mistake not to take advantage of this interest and assistance.

At no time in recent years has the interest in promoting production record keeping, outside the ranks of extension dairymen, been stronger than it is now. The fact that the Weigh-A-Day plan is a method of keeping records that small dairy farmers can afford is undoubtedly the main reason for this.

3. When you launch the Weigh-A-Day-A-Month program, make full use of mass communication media to explain and build interest in it. Take time to work out a publicity campaign with your information service. Use all the means available-press, radio and television, posters, leaflets, etc., for telling the need for and value of production records.
4. Before launching a campaign to sell the Weigh-A-Day-A-Month plan, hold conferences with your county agricultural agents. Give them all the details and work out plans for launching the program in each county. You may want to urge them to launch their county programs simultaneously. This would enable them to capitalize on State-wide publicity. On the other hand it may be impractical to start the program simultaneously in all counties and county agents should help make this decision.

Make a special effort to provide county agents with background information on the need for and value of production records. Give them help on the use of records in the areas of breeding, feeding and management of herds. Urge them to use local information wherever possible. (See Manual for additional suggestions on this point.)

5. Another important consideration is the proper integration of the Weigh-A-Day-A-Month plan into or with currently established record keeping plans as DHIA or Owner-Sampler. The Weigh-A-Day plan should definitely supplement the others.

In some counties it may work best to integrate the new plan into the DHIA or Owner-Sampler plans completely. In others it may work best to have them operate independently.

6. As the program develops in your State or in one of your counties make sure everyone understands that the different record keeping plans are part and parcel of the National Cooperative Dairy Herd Improvement program. This will not be easy because for years we have referred to the DHIA program as the National Cooperative Dairy Herd Improvement Program. Now we want those words to have

a broader meaning. We want folks to understand that the National Cooperative Dairy Herd Improvement Program incorporates three record keeping plans--DHIA, Owner-Sampler and Weigh-A-Day. More than that we want to sell the idea that records are the tools for building efficient and profitable dairy herds and that the broad program encompasses educational work in the areas of breeding, feeding, and management as well as record keeping itself.

7. You should make clear, too, that the National Cooperative Dairy Herd Improvement Program is an extension project. It involves cooperation between the Dairy Husbandry Research Branch, Agricultural Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, the State extension services and the organizations within the States and/or counties who are responsible for the actual record keeping. If anyone questions this statement, all you need to do is refer to the Memorandum of Understanding which is in effect between your State and the Dairy Husbandry Research Branch. In that memorandum the responsibilities of all parties concerned is spelled out in detail.
8. As you launch the Weigh-A-Day program questions may arise concerning organization and supervision in the counties. As previously indicated, no special organization is necessary. In some counties the sponsoring agencies or organizations may make organization unnecessary. On the other hand, if no sponsoring agency or organization is able to assume the responsibility for the business end of the operation, an advisory committee (board of directors) with officers should be selected or elected from among the participating dairymen.

The county agent, in cooperation with the local dairy committee, develops the Weigh-a-Day plan of recordkeeping in his county, carries out the necessary educational work for implementing it, and supervises its progress. He arranges for a computing service to calculate the records and return the information to participating farmers.

The local dairy committee, with the advice and counsel of the county agent, should have responsibility for operating the plan--that is, select secretary-treasurer, establish and collect Weigh-a-Day plan fees, and establish and pay for computing service. The Weigh-a-Day clerk may serve as secretary-treasurer and handle business of the plan. The clerk should work under the direction of the committee and under the general supervision of the county agent.

9. The Weigh-A-Day-A-Month record keeping program should be under the direction and supervision of the county agricultural agents so it can be kept properly integrated into the county dairy program, and to make sure that the recommended procedure will be followed in computing, summarizing and reporting the records. County agents must be required to make regular reports to the dairy husbandry

extension service so the Extension dairyman can in turn make reports to the U. S. Department of Agriculture Dairy Husbandry Research Branch.

10. The last suggestion which you should consider when you launch the Weigh-A-Day plan is the question of cost. You should make sure the charge to farmers will cover the expense. You may want to charge more or less than the 5¢ per cow per month which is suggested. We would not advise free service even if some organization offers to pay the cost. Farmers will get more from the records if they pay for them.

As you attempt to decide on the merits of the Weigh-A-Day-A-Month record keeping plan and the use you will be able to make of it, we would like to remind you of one significant fact. It is this--In all the years since the first cow testing association was organized, there has never been a time when the interest in production record keeping was greater than it is today. More than that, there has never been a time when support for promoting production record keeping was as much in evidence as it is today. The announcement of the Weigh-A-Day plan attracted nationwide attention and it is being actively supported by several national farm organizations.

Finally, the Weigh-A-Day plan has been approved by the American Dairy Science Association as a part of the National Cooperative Dairy Herd Improvement program and it has also been approved by the Extension Organization and Policy Committee for inclusion in the over-all dairy husbandry extension program throughout the country. Could anyone ask for a better opportunity to promote a worthwhile project such as this.

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